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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of politics in the restructuring of Chicago public schools. The Chicago educational system was deliberately altered to change the way decisions were made at the school level. Based on recent research on citizen participation and renewal of democratic institutions, the paper advances a theme that is germane to Chicago school reform--enhanced democratic activity at the local level can be an effective antidote to unresponsive societal institutions like urban public schools. Case studies of 22 Chicago elementary schools were conducted from 1990-1994. Five types of school-based political practice were identified: (1) consolidated principal power through autocratic control; (2) consolidated principal power through maternal control; (3) maintenance politics; (4) adversarial politics; and (5) strong democracy. A main route to strong democracy is principal initiative. Parents and teachers can also exert leadership in strong democracy schools. Contains 43 references. (LMI)

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POLITICS AS A LEVER FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

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Politics as a Lever for Organizational Change

As we began to write this book, Chicago was completing its fourth year of reform. It was clear that unprecedented participation and political activity had been initiated in some individual school communities,[1] while others might more appropriately be described as schools left behind by reform."[2] Thus the city's efforts at reforming its schools offers a natural experiment to examine the development of school politics.

Since politics was chosen as the prime lever for reform in Chicago, we begin by taking a closer look at what we already know about the nature of school politics. As we started our inquiry, we were concerned that the primary analytic frame in educational politics--pluralist bargaining--might prove insufficient to address the full range of democratic activity catalyzed by Chicago's reform. We were observing a period of potentially profound organizational change catalyzed by a deliberate effort to change the way decisions are made at the school level. In expanding our conception, we turned for guidance to recent writings about citizen participation and renewal of democratic institutions. Although these arguments vary somewhat, they all advance a theme that is germane to Chicago school reform--enhanced democratic activity at the local level can be an effective antidote to unresponsive societal institutions like urban public schools.

Why School Politics Matters

Nationally, as more and more districts decentralize responsibility, politics at the school level has become important.[3] The local school is now a more consequential site of power. The amount of political activity within the school expands as more resources, responsibility and decision-making authority are devolved to the local level.[4]

The importance of school politics appears especially salient during efforts to restructure schools and to build professional community within faculties. Proponents of restructuring--both those internal to the school's professional staff and also change agents from the outside--have been somewhat naive about the conflicts that are likely to arise when schools are asked to change from hierarchical organizations with a long history of line control, to more collaborative, democratically organized ones where broad participation in decision-making is valued and leadership roles are expanded. When changes in role, authority and responsibility are initiated, rivalries and jealousies may be unleashed as teachers' roles are recast and their relationship to the principal and other colleagues changes.[5] These political problems can be complicated further, if, as has occurred in Chicago, new authority and leadership roles are intended for parent and community members as well as local school professionals.

At the most fundamental level, the heart of restructuring is structural change. Past reforms tinkered with the margins of the school.[6] Incremental improvements may have resulted, but core operations were generally maintained. Now national attention focuses on the restructuring of our educational system to produce higher levels of attainment for all students. It is argued that the conventional organization of schools is a major source of their failure. To

create the new, high performing organizations necessary to produce better outcomes, fundamental change is called for. Thus, just as a devolution of authority seeks to change relations of power within the district and within the school, so too do the incremental reforms of the past give way to a demand for structural change.[7] At the present time, then, the status quo is being challenged both in governance arrangements and the organizational practice of schools.[8]

Traditional Conceptions of Educational Politics

Most past research on educational politics has been conceptualized through a pluralist lens. Political activity is typically defined as negotiations over the allocation of scarce resources between groups or individuals whose interests are viewed as fixed and static. At base here is a conception of individual interests assumed in rational choice theory that sees "individuals as seeking to maximize their utility, rationally choosing the best means to serve their goals."[9] Moreover,

> rational choice theory assumes that individual preferences are given. . . [It] ignore[s] the effects of education, of persuasion. . and the role of leadership, as if economic man was a biological-psychological miracle, born fully formed, say in his mid-twenties with his preferences 'immaculately conceived'.[10]

This conception extends directly to explain the behavior of interest groups as well. They are regarded as a unity of like-minded individuals who come together when their interests momentarily align and a situation makes it expedient to do so. Beyond this instrumental aim, they remain "unfettered individuals."[11]

Pluralist bargaining within an organization most often takes place in private, one-on-one

negotiations. Peterson, for example, described much of the real deal-making on Chicago's Board of Education as taking place in closed session or even private conversations that violated the Open Meetings Act. Board meetings then became a symbolic gesture to vote on issues that had already been decided.[12]

These pluralist negotiations may affect incremental change, but the basic structure of political systems--power relations and the representation of interests within them--rarely changes. Neither does how things get done. In schools, the institutional basis of work includes a vast array of organizational practices that are generally taken for granted and consequently have proven difficult to challenge; for example, the tracking of students, the "eggcrate structure" of classroom teaching, the separation of subjects and departmentalization of teaching, and so on.[13] Because pluralist politics essentially preserves the status quo with regard to institutional features and political practice, we use the term "maintenance politics" to describe it.

Maintenance Politics at the District Level

Most recent studies of educational politics in urban districts have focused on the efforts of powerful vested groups to control jobs and contracts.[14] Peterson, for example, analyzed the mayoral appointments to Chicago's Board of Education, and their subsequent decision-making, over a multi-year period in the sixties.[15] Mayor Daley appointed members to the Board of Education in direct relation to their power in city politics. He was aware of the struggle over community control that was occurring at the same time in New York City. He wanted to keep Chicago school politics focused on things he could leverage--jobs, contracts and money--rather than ideological issues like community control. Consequently, Daley added representatives of new interest groups--women, African Americans and Hispanics--when it became politically

expedient to do so. While these new members may have been female and minority, the mayor took great pains to select individuals whose political views most closely aligned with his. Moreover, as token members they did not have enough votes to challenge traditional ways of doing things, and so they had to cooperate with the established interests on the Board in order to have any impact on decision-making. In addition, Daley used a mixture of sanctions and rewards, private promises and public negotiations to control the Board, and this pluralist politics kept individual members and the interest groups that they represented both placated and at bay.

Peterson describes Mayor Daley as a consummate machine politician--a term that the author equates with skilled pluralist bargaining.[16] Marginal changes were affected through the Mayor's appointments to the school board and negotiations with members over time, but the basic structure of the system--the organization of work, power relations and the representation of interests within it--was essentially maintained.[17]

Maintenance Politics at the School Level

The same lens of pluralist politics has been used productively to analyze political activity occurring within the school building as well. Much of this research has focused on relationships between the principal and faculty.[18] Ironically, in many schools, there is little public political activity. Rather, teachers and the principal seem to tacitly accept and understand their respective domains of practice and responsibility, having long ago negotiated treaties about how they will behave toward each other and the organization of their work.[19] Expectations build up around these treaties, and over time norms of work develop and daily life becomes highly routinized and non-contested. There is little need for public discussion, and so faculty and other school meetings become perfunctory. In such places politics seems nonexistent, and organizational

practice appears to be intractable.

Most of the political activity that does occur takes place in private as individual teachers meet with their principal to advance their own interests--be it a plum teaching program, new materials, the best classroom space, the assignment of motivated, well behaved students to their classrooms, and so on.[20] The primary function of the principal in these encounters is to use the resources at hand to mediate between the interests of different teachers (or factions of teachers aligned with specific school programs). Through these negotiations the principal seeks to satisfy everyone, and keep the lid on nascent dissent and potential demands for more substantive change.

The public political activities that do occur tend to be orchestrated by principals. Rather than negotiating everything one-on-one, principals sometimes create faculty committees and then send certain issues there for discussion and a vote.[21] But these public activities may not be occasions for real debate. Instead, time for discussion is often short, teachers may not be fully informed, and the ensuing conversation is consequently superficial. Such activities create a semblance of representational democracy; their real value is buffering the principal from criticism about decisions that are made.[22]

Clearly there are times and situations when maintenance politics is constructive, and other times when the same activities might block necessary change. For example, the presence of non-contested standard operating procedures that help to organize daily life certainly contributes to school efficiency. Similarly, in some instances where consensus may not be necessary or attainable, voting can be a quick and efficient decision-making process. Pluralist bargaining can also be an effective way to allocate resources in situations where they are relatively ample, and

so their distribution is not likely to be highly contested. Moreover, placating individuals and factions may be critical to the survival of a polity if the dynamics within it are particularly volatile at a specific time. In such instances, making side-payments to all parties might temporarily soothe nerves and create an opportunity for people to re-group.[23]

Maintenance politics appears well adapted for "good" schools, where there is little sense that fundamental change is needed. In fact, it can be argued that the reason why the pluralist bargaining frame has so adequately conceptualized school micro-politics to date, is because the schools that have been studied generally are perceived by their communities to be good ones.[24] Neither the professional staff, nor students, nor the parents or larger community is sharply critical of their operations. Thus, the changes that are contemplated need not challenge roles, responsibilities and core operations.

As noted in the prologue, however, these conditions do not characterize most of Chicago's schools. Advocates of Chicago's reform knew that if politics was to be a lever for change, new political practice was necessary.

Alternative Conceptions

Adversarial Politics

In fact, when reform was first passed in Chicago many worried that the legislation would usher community politics directly into the school building. As bad as Chicago schools were, some feared that this might make them even worse. One potential threat was Alinsky- style organizing.

As is well known, Saul Alinsky got his start in Chicago's Back of the Yards neighbor-

hood on the southwest side in the 1930's. His brand of community organizing then, and his legacy now, was adversarial by design. Based in working-class neighborhoods, and often organized around the local Catholic Church, Alinsky focused on tangible issues that were of concern to local residents, and winnable in the short term. Alinsky's strategy was to organize the "have nots" by exacerbating tensions between them and the "haves." He sometimes instigated crises in an effort to motivate the former to better define and act in their own interests. Moreover, to make issues accessible to the people that he was trying to organize, Alinsky personalized the enemy. The immediate aim of political action would be to oust the individual who personified the evils of an unfair system. A secondary aim was to organize the "have-nots" into a power bloc that could be mobilized for subsequent actions.

Alinsky- style CBOs developed in many Chicago neighborhoods and some survive to this day. Prior to the passage of reform there were several notable instances when these local groups focused on school issues, and succeeded in targeting and removing a callous and/or ineffectual school principal or teacher.

[25] These short term victories had disastrous consequences in some school communities, however. While confrontational politics might succeed in removing a principal, more often than not, the teachers identified with their ousted leader and felt a mixture of resentment and intimidation that a community group could come in and "run their school." Such strategies left long simmering resentments between professionals and parents, and a latent struggle for power and control of the school.

The difficulty with this form of politics for schools seems obvious. Removing a principal will not, by itself, make a school work. School restructuring is not a quick fix. Neither is it an

activity that principals, teachers, and/or parents and community members who are alienated from each other can achieve on their own. Rather, it requires a long term commitment among local participants, and collaboration across the three sites of power. This shared work, in turn, depends on many factors; the development of trust, respect, and the forging of a common commitment to meet the needs of children.

Strong Democratic Politics

These needs focus attention on how to foster a broad involvement of parents and school professionals working toward school improvement. This conception of "strong democracy"--of citizens working toward a locally defined common good--is not new. Rather, it rings of classical notions about citizens' participation in the "polis."[26] It is central to the "voluntary associations" that De Tocqueville saw in frontier America in the 1840's as well.[27] It is also the implicit theory of Chicago school reform.

Four key features stand out. The theory assumes: sustained citizen participation; a greater emphasis on self-government and consensual decision-making rather than representative government and voting; public concern as a motivating force rather than private interests; and a process of legitimation of core values and guiding ideas through public debate.

Participation is thought to be the animating force in a strong democracy. As individuals learn citizenship skills as a result of their involvement, they become capable of self-government. To achieve this end, it is argued that local communities need to become "schools for democracy . . free spaces" where individuals can come together to learn to set agendas and chair meetings and other necessary, instrumental tasks.[28] In Chicago's legislation the LSC was deliberately designed as a new local institution to foster such experiences.

At a more fundamental level, when individuals participate in self-governing activities over time, it is argued that they develop capacity to be "deliberating, determining, and deciding. . . [not] impulsive, arbitrary, or unconsidered."[29] This emphasis on self-government and civic education contrasts with representative democracy where problems and policy-making are often taken out of the public realm and delegated to experts and lobbyists.[30]

Strong democracy also depends on citizens who maintain concern for the public. Individuals do not start out with this orientation, however. Rather, as a result of participation, private interests are transformed into public concerns. But how does this transformation take place? Through what activities do private interests become public concerns? And then by what mechanism can these newly formulated public concerns challenge organizational arrangements and institutional powers--the status quo?

According to strong democratic theory, the primary activity is talk. When citizens need to be decisive and take action they must:

> create a public language that will help reformulate private interests in terms susceptible to public accommodation; and it aims at understanding individuals not as abstract persons but as citizens, so that commonality and equality rather than separateness are the defining traits of human society. [31]

When conversation galvanizes people and takes on this mobilizing function, it moves into the realm of coalition building, ideological development, and action. In a strong democracy, then, individuals and groups are not born with fixed interests as rational choice proponents would have us believe. Neither do they come into coalition solely on the basis of ascribed characteristics, such as race, age, gender, and class as is sometimes claimed.[32] Rather, when

people engage in political debate, each participant brings into the discussion unique understandings and interpretations of key concepts that have been developed from their own experiences. These understandings are normative for them, but may be new to others in the group. In the short term, this transportation of practices may exacerbate the differences across people, and sites of power, and appear divisive.[33] In the longer term, however, if public discourse is sustained, the dialogue can become an avenue for resolving conflict. More importantly, it can promote an enlarged sympathy that serves to coalesce and enrich the group. In this way public debate becomes the basis for developing coherent and shared understandings that can stimulate coalition building, motivate unified action, and challenge existing power arrangements and organizational practice.

In most general terms, in a strong democracy ideas matter and politics focuses on the meanings of key ideas. Concepts such as liberty, freedom, equality, rights, and citizen have been used by some groups in the past to question entitlements. Over the course of history this competition over ideas, imbued as it were with a moral authority, has functioned as a lever for organizing people to transform institutional arrangements--to challenge the status quo.[34]

When the same logic is applied to a school, one would anticipate a school characterized as a strong democracy to have a politics that is focused on the needs of children. The authors of the Chicago's reform were confident that if parents were more involved in school decision-making, this activity would serve children. Distrusting local school professionals many of whom they regarded as self-interested,[35] reformers banked on the notion that parents' interest would be distinct from that of principals and teachers, and carry enough moral authority to change a school.[36]

Parents' concern for children's welfare has been a mainstay of American education, and their voice has always carried moral authority in conversations about the purpose and mission of schools.[37] This voice is often strong, organized and very persuasive in suburban contexts.[38] In Chicago reform this authority was legitimized, in giving parents and community members majority control of the LSC, and then granting the LSC authority to select a school leader whose values might compliment their own. It was argued that principals hired by an LSC would be compelled to engage parents, community and faculty; a dramatic departure from past practice where they looked up into the system for direction, approval and tangible rewards.[39] Further, with their own attention re-directed, principals might exert new pressure on their faculties to focus on the needs of the students as well. This heightened local democratic activity might then create a sense of urgency among adults across the three sites of power to work together on children's behalf. In this way democratic discourse, and the forging of a common interest, could promote structural change in a school.

Consolidated Principals' Power

The rhetoric of strong democracy is engaging in that it captures the hopes and essence of American life.[40] Much of the writing about strong democracy is not, however, empirically based. In moving these ideas into urban schools they confront some harsh realities which must also be considered. Prior to reform, for example, Beacon School was a chaotic place in spite of a system of strong line control that started at the central office. Bureaucrats there told sub-district superintendents, like Mr. Baker, what to do. They, in turn, told principals, who told their teachers, who told their students. In fact, the rare principal like Mac who bucked this system gained a reputation of being creatively insubordinant--even if ineffectual. By contrast,

those principals who adhered to the command structure of the hierarchy, and maintained order in their buildings, were regarded as good within the system.

Prior to reform these "good" urban principals seemed to embrace one of two leadership styles, which while appearing very different on the surface, led to the same ends. Some were autocrats.[41] They often were sent by the central office to schools that were reputed to be "out of control." Given a position of traditional authority,[42] the principals' job was to get and maintain personal control at any costs. The most significant edicts of autocratic principals might be delivered in private--whether they were talking to questioning parents, dis-agreeable teachers or an intimidating gang member on the grounds. In some cases their rule might mirror the violence that they were sent in to stop; witness a Joe Clark patrolling school hallways with a baseball bat. Other principals might use slightly more subtle tactics of fear and intimidation; for example, removing a teacher from a coveted program if she bucked the line, or even transferring a child from one class to another if their parents proved problematic. For the most successful of these principals such tactics became reputational. Subsequent actions were not always needed; an implied threat might be sufficient.

Other principals, like Mac from the Beacon School, developed a more paternal (or maternal) leadership style. Mac encouraged his teachers and parents to feel dependent on him, and needful of his continuing protection and guidance. Principals like Mac consolidated and maintained power because they ran their schools like families where the children (the faculty and parents) deferred to them. Such family settings might be more comfortable for members than autocracies. They too prove to be debilitating in the long run, however, because neither teachers nor parents are helped to grow to a point where they can confidently make decisions on their

own.[43]

Needless to say, in many urban neighborhoods, if a strong principal can consolidate power and bring peace out of chaos, the majority of the school community will cheer the results--regardless of leadership style. Moreover, in a community where violence is pervasive, and gangs, drugs and weapons are ever-present worries, the strong autocrat or parent figure who can restore and maintain order is preferable to the bedlam and disorder that occurred when there was no legitimate leadership at all. The success of both types of principal depends on the same factors. They need to develop and sustain a vertically ordered, top-down control system that sets expectations for the community and organizes daily life.[44] Principals who can offer some modicum of personal protection to their immediate communities and create a zone of order within the buildings and grounds, will achieve a loyal following. This will enable them to consolidate and maintain their personal power--regardless of the passage of any law that legislates a different politics and encourages a different leadership style. Consolidated principals' power was the status quo for many Chicago schools when reform was first passed. This base state raises questions about whether Chicago's legislation, or any other intervention, is strong enough to disrupt the social system described here.

Case Studies of Local School Politics

Combining these theoretical ideas about democratic politics with our field observations in Chicago elementary schools over the last four years has helped us to identify four distinct types of school-based political practice. On the one hand there are school communities that seem largely untouched by reform. The politics in these school communities closely resembles either

the consolidated principals' power or maintenance politics discussed above. In contrast, much greater levels of potential activism have emerged in other school communities. Political practice in these sites also falls into two different categories--adversarial or strong democratic.

Below we elaborate each of the four types of local school political activity through short case studies developed from the case study synthesis of twenty-two Chicago elementary schools. A brief analysis follows each case. In some instances, the descriptions are composites of events from two or more schools within the same type. The names of the schools, key individuals, and organizations have been changed in order to protect confidentiality agreements. Some minor details have also been blurred to obscure the identity of the particular events, but all described events are real. Further, these events are not unusual instances; rather they generally characterize life as we have observed it in each type of school.

The Howard School: Consolidated Principal Power through Autocratic Control

Five years before reform, Howard was "up for grabs." The principal, Mrs. Stanley, paid little attention to when teachers arrived at school each morning nor to when they left. Neither did she confront disruptive parents when they sometimes barged into classrooms to "have a few words" with their child or with the teacher. Standards of behavior for students were inconsistently enforced as well. Fighting was commonplace throughout the building, and so was swearing at teachers.

When Mrs. Stanley retired, the central office assigned Mr. Bangor. It was his first principalship, and he said that his "marching orders were to clean up Howard. . .it didn't matter how. . .just clean it up." He was scared at first, for his own physical safety as well as for what might happen to his career if he did not succeed. But in a few years, under Mr. Bangor's

leadership, Howard changed from "a terrible place where everyone was mad" to a more amicable environment with civil norms of behavior, standard operating procedures, and established daily routines. Even so, Mr. Bangor feels that the "place could explode in a second . . . without a moment's notice" and that he must "monitor everyone and everything constantly so that it won't spin out of control again." In spite of reform, then, Mr. Bangor's leadership style has remained constant. He was sent in to "get control. . .to do a job," and that is the job that he continues to do.

Since the advent of reform, however, the principal's authority has been challenged by a community representative on the LSC. Mrs. Carter said that "he [Mr. Bangor] doesn't deserve a contract because the school isn't any good. . . .Maybe its nicer than the school down the street, but so what? Our kids aren't getting educated like they should. . . .None of these little children are learning to read!"

When Mr. Bangor heard that Mrs. Carter was organizing against him, he was furious. He lamented the fact that he had been so helpful to the council during the first difficult months of reform. "I did everything for them," he told us. "I stayed late every night to help them. They didn't know how to run a meeting. . . they didn't even know what an agenda was. Some thanks I get!" He regretted his decision to steer clear of the first LSC election as well, saying, "Ms. Smith over at the Green School handpicked her council, but I thought, 'That's too political. I shouldn't do that!' Well, wasn't I the fool?"

Mr. Bangor did not waste much time feeling sorry for himself. He asked his parents for support, and many came to his defense. To reward the most active among them, he reassigned a few of their children to "better" classes. His response to the teachers was more subtle. Mr.

Bangor offered the PPAC chair, Mr. Smyth, a new position as "school disciplinarian" shortly after an LSC meeting where he questioned Mr. Bangor's leadership. Once Mr. Smyth became disciplinarian, he stopped attending LSC meetings and also resigned as PPAC chair, claiming that he was now too busy in his new role. The leadership for any budding teacher opposition had been effectively squashed.

It was also rumored that Mr. Bangor "snooped around" the community a bit to "get some stuff" on Mrs. Carter. No one will say what the "stuff" was, but the two had a few private meetings about that time. While Mrs. Carter did not drop out of the council, another parent told us: "It was like a cat got her tongue or there was a frog in her throat. Someone told that lady to quiet down!"

Mr. Bangor eventually got a contract, and he told us that he "learned a lot from his mistakes." He said that he was "going to really run the school now. . .teachers and parents really want that anyway and I don't intend to become vulnerable again."

Shortly after his contract was signed, Mr. Bangor went to an out-of-town conference sponsored by a computer company. He came back with a proposal to use a large portion of the school's discretionary money to create a computer lab with a full-time instructor, multiple workstations, and software designed to prepare students for the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. When several teachers expressed an interest in spending the money differently, Mr. Bangor convinced them that the computers were a good idea. He said that with the lab and a new instructor, every teacher would have an additional preparation period each week. This additional free time, which was gladly welcomed by the teachers, was sufficient incentive to stifle any alternative initiatives.

Mr. Bangor also became directly involved in subsequent LSC and PPAC elections. He

encouraged his allies to run, and he drummed up support for them. He also found school aide positions for two young mothers on the council who previously had raised questions about his contract renewal. They were grateful to Mr. Bangor for the work. He said that they were better off with jobs and "weren't qualified for the council anyway."

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Despite the explicit intent of reform to expand parent, community, and teacher participation, little of this has occurred in some schools. Principals in these sites tell us that they were resentful of reform, especially the demands that it made on them to embrace shared decision-making. Thus, at the advent of reform, when teachers, parents, and community members may have initially tried to organize, these principals may not have supported their efforts and may even have undermined them. The LSC and PPAC in these schools both tend to be largely comprised of individuals who may not know each other well and have little past experience in governance activity. The monthly LSC meetings and bi-annual public meetings that are mandated by the legislation may duly take place in these schools. There is generally low participation and minimal discussion, however, and principals dominate the conversation that does occur. Except in crisis situations, substantive and/or problematic issues are unlikely to come up.[45] As a result of this lack of social resource, dialogue and expertise, neither the LSC nor the faculty is able to sustain activity that might effectively challenge the principal's authority. As a result, power remains consolidated in the principalship.

Consolidated Principals Power through Maternal Control

Thirty years ago Alexander School served a thriving community. Today, in contrast,

there is a preponderance of female-headed households, an absence of middle class and male role models, a loss of population and community institutions, and a diminution of political activity. Most importantly, this community lacks the extended networks which used to support families and children. Without such networks, the consequences of poverty, drugs and violence appear much more devastating here, especially to the "young moms" who struggle on their own to survive and keep their children safe.

THe current situation contrast with a not so distant past when mothers--in this neighborhood and others julst like it--were generally older, somewhat more advantaged, and less hesitant to talk to teachers and get involved. Fathers and grandparents were also more active. Today, the main group with potential to become a viable presence is the "young moms," and while the LSC chair talks about her efforts to "corral" some of them to get involved, she knows it won't be easy. One reason is safety. The school does not want to be responsible for people being out after dark, and this forces meetings to be scheduled during the school day. Consequently, those parents who work--some of whom are interested and have the most to contribute to the school--can never attend the meetings. A problem for yet another group of parents is embarrassment about their own academic skills and their consequent reluctance to converse with teachers. Finally, in some cases there is a latent hostility that keeps parents away. Some young moms have negative memories of their own schooling, and they believe that teachers regard them with disdain. The LSC chair asks and answers her own questions about what "kind of role models these moms are for their kids when they feel so hateful and hated? It can't be good."

When PA 85-1418 first passed, it looked like the Act might make a difference. Everyone

was curious about the new law, and there was a flurry of activity. The LSC election was contested, and there was a quorum at the first several meetings. When it came time to evaluate the principal, however, the Council wanted to skip Mrs. Green's evaluation, and just write a contract. Thus, the process was superficial. There was minimal involvement, minimal discussion, and minimal learning as a result.

By the second year of reform, excitement had dissipated. Monthly LSC meetings were called, but there was rarely a quorum, and never an audience. Over the years of reform the Council has maintained a core of hard-working and well-intentioned women, between the ages of twenty-five and thirty. The chair has told us often that she is proud that there is no fighting on her Council, or in the school, as there is in some neighboring schools. Unfortunately, there is little conversation either. It was only in the spring when a system-wide financial crunch threatened the school with closure, that the LSC got moving again. The school stayed open (because the Board of Education was pressured by community activists citywide not to close any schools at that time), but it was not an experience that united the school community. The LSC chair, felt overwhelmed, tired and discouraged when only fifty parents showed up for a "Save Alexander Rally" that she had organized. Mrs. Green expressed her frustration with the parents too, calling them "the most apathetic bunch" she had ever seen. Once the crisis passed, the principal and the LSC chair called meetings to discuss how the school might distinguish itself enough to avoid future closing lists. The meetings went unattended.

The problems of the LSC are mirrored in the experiences of the larger faculty and Alexander's PPAC as it too grapples with local school governance. Sixteen candidates competed for the first PPAC election, because the faculty, like the broader parent group, was curious.

Teachers were confused, however, about the PPAC's identity and purpose. Many thought it was the "Professional Problems Committee" of the union. Others understood that the PPAC was to be advisory on issues of curriculum and instruction, but they were unclear if it was to function independently of the principal. Some members said that they could not discuss pedagogy without the principal; others insisted that they could never develop an independent voice if she joined them.

This issue took up the PPAC's attention for most of the school year, and it was a controversy from which they never recovered. The principal dropped out when she was appraised of the problem surrounding her participation, and so did that contingent that wanted her involved. The chair abdicated next, and another teacher volunteered to replace her since, "no one else wanted it." When no candidates came forward for an election, the chair had to ask a few of her friends on the faculty to volunteer as a personal favor. The new PPAC met once in the fall of 1992 but it has not met since.

In addition to their inability to organize a PPAC, the faculty, as a whole, shows little interest in their own growth as professionals. Alexander teachers (like a majority of faculties across the city) voted to go on closed campus several years ago, and many Alexander teachers keep the same short hours (8:30 am to 2:30 pm) that their students do. This means that a few teachers are called upon to do everything, a situation that parallels the LSC.

There are, however, some teachers at Alexander, like some of the parents on the LSC, who are caring, hard-working and deeply concerned about the students. They would like to serve them better and over the years they have individually enrolled in countless courses and bought dozens of programs, but nothing seems to bring achievement up. Some of these teachers

persist in their efforts, while others have gotten demoralized and one by one they have given up. These teachers blame the students and the young moms for low achievement, and insist that they "have tried everything." This portion of the veteran faculty is "riding out their time" until retirement. Ms. Green complains that their lack of motivation to examine their own practice is the most serious obstacle to school improvement.

It is instructive to note that a majority of the teachers at Alexander went to Chicago schools as students. Most were then credentialed in Chicago, and have subsequently spent their entire careers at Alexander, or a school just like it. These teachers are hard pressed to imagine alternatives. This poses a significant obstacle to reform as the heart of this legislation is the opportunity, in each local school community, to create alternatives. When we asked the assistant principal to describe for us "a good school" he said, "off the top of my head, that's hard for me to say. . .I haven't graduated to that way of thinking yet."

Being Alexander's principal is a difficult job. Mrs. Green has to do double duty, with parents as well as teachers, to overcome their isolation, hostility, fear, lack of confidence and skills. Mrs. Green has taken on this challenge by becoming the school's "mom." She has been in the school "since forever" (she came to Alexander as a teacher when she was 22) and so "she knows everyone and everything." She has accepted the burden of nurturing this school community. In fact, parents and children often look at her and the school as a safe haven, which compared to the neighborhood, it is. Mrs. Green acknowledges that at times she is an "overprotective mother reluctant to let any of her children grow." She recognizes that some of the parents' and teachers' dependence might be because she does too much for them.

Mrs. Green's maternal style has also taken a personal toll. She has "never been so

exhausted," since the advent of reform, and she finds that she is "snapping out" in a way that disturbs her and offends the very people she so wants to succeed. She describes with regret:

> I called two teachers in for a conference regarding the performance of their students on the IOWA tests. I remember saying, 'I'm ashamed of you. You could have stayed at home and the students could have stayed at home to get these results. This is ridiculous. You were coming every day and they were coming every day, for what?' That's terrible, I mean I was so angry to get those scores, that it caught me at a bad moment. I later apologized.

Mrs. Green wants reform to succeed in her school. She wants to see her parents and their children create a better life for themselves, and she wants her faculty to become more professional, not only so the children will learn more, but "so that they will feel good about themselves." She worries about the distance her school community must travel to achieve her vision.

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Alexander's situation is troubled. The malaise, isolation and alienation that pervades the neighborhood is mirrored in the school. Teachers have few external resources to support their work and many are no longer motivated to change. Some parents work hard for the school, but their numbers are few. The principal is a tragic-heroine who tries to care for all of them--students, parents and teachers--but whose maternal leadership ironically stifles initiative and disables others' capacity to grow. At first visit, Alexander appears as a peaceful island amidst a truly disadvantaged community. But that peace is secured at a price: Little of significance is ever discussed and activity is hard to organize and sustain. The status quo seems insurmountable.

The Sowell School: Maintenance Politics[46]

Sowell has always been regarded as a good school. It was built thirty years ago to serve the children of a "planned, integrated community." Many of the faculty asked for transfers to the school when it first opened, and Mrs. Donahue asked for the school when the previous principal retired several years prior to reform. Mrs. Donahue and the teachers talk about how lucky they are to be at Sowell, compared to their experiences in other Chicago schools.

For the last several years, enrollment has been dropping at Sowell as rising home prices have placed the neighborhood beyond the reach of many younger families with children. In order to keep its attendance up, the school now enrolls students from a wide area, and this change in attendance boundaries has brought in some children from poor neighborhoods. The achievement of these children is not as good as that of the neighborhood group, so the professional staff made a decision to place these students in special classes. This arrangement makes it possible for these low income children to have smaller class sizes and to benefit from school aides and some extra materials purchased with categorical funds. Most important, teachers say they are able to slow the pace of instruction to meet the needs of the children. The new children and their parents seem pleased with these arrangements. In fact, they echo the professional staff when they tell you how much they like their new school, how much nicer it is than the school in their neighborhood, and how special they, too, feel to be at Sowell.

When it was time for the first LSC elections, none of the parents of the poor children ran nor did any community candidates come from the disadvantaged neighborhoods. No one regarded this as a problem, however, because everyone seemed to get along. Council members went to some training, and other than figuring out how to do all that was required of them in

the first few months of reform, no big issues caught the council's attention. The PPAC also went through the motions. An election was held, but at the first meeting, when the teachers realized that their role was only an advisory one, one said, "I like the way things are, so why should I take time giving advice about how to change them?"

The principal also thought that reform "took a lot of time, but it was no big deal." When the guidelines came out for developing the first lump-sum budget, she had a meeting with her LSC, and they asked her what the faculty wanted. She did not know, so she called a faculty meeting and presented the budget. She said, "The LSC wants your input. Look over the budget and tell me what you need for your programs next year."

At first the teachers did not say much. Mrs. Weintraub, the LSC teacher representative, suggested that they just revise last year's budget to "reflect inflation, their lane placement adjustments, and stuff like that." In contrast, Mrs. Imel, who worked with some of the poor children, said: "Wait. What about buying some new stuff? My friend at the Cortez School works with kids like mine and her principal used Chapter I to buy some computers for her classroom. Can I get some?" Needless to say, several of the teachers thought that computers were a good idea, and within a few moments, everyone wanted one. Mrs. Donahue was then in a difficult position. "I think I can buy some computers for the Chapter I children as Mrs. Imel suggested, but I can't use Chapter I to make purchases for the other classrooms. I can only use that money for the low achieving kids."

The faculty was upset and divided. The teacher who taught the Chapter I children left the meeting thinking about what they could do with their new classroom computers. They were already planning what kind of software they wanted to buy. In contrast, their colleagues felt

cheated. They were "fussing" together about "all of the perks poor kids got" as they walked down the hall. One even grumbled that she was going to go to the next council meeting and "let the parents know that the poor kids were going to get computers, while their kids [the LSC members'] weren't!"

Luckily, the principal crafted a plan that she thought would settle the conflict quickly and satisfy both factions. Several of the parents and community representatives on her council worked for large firms downtown, including some of the banks most active in supporting local schools and councils during the early days of reform. She asked her council members if they might be able to get their firms to donate computers, and she used some of her own connections in the corporate world to make similar requests. When it came time for the LSC meeting where the lump-sum budget would be approved, Mrs. Donahue opened the meeting with a special "Appreciation Ceremony" where she recognized her LSC and several of their employers. A dozen personal computers and a printer had been graciously donated to the school, and these were assigned to the classrooms of the more advantaged students. With their discretionary money, the school was able to purchase a similar amount of hardware for the classrooms of the poor children.

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In schools like Sowell most participants are basically complacent. This can occur in "good" schools that are advantaged relative to the rest of the system, and also in some "weaker" schools where participants nonetheless seem satisfied with their current arrangements.

The maintenance politics at Sowell assumes a traditional, pluralist mode. The principal is a mediator, and since the passage of reform in Chicago, discretionary money is one of the

main things that she negotiates.[47] Her initial strategy was to divide new monies up among teachers and existing programs, rather than to undertake comprehensive new initiatives or fundamentally restructure existing arrangements. Much to her surprise, this public negotiation proved problematic as it separated her teachers into interest groups, each with their own programs and projects to fund. She smoothed over the nascent controversy, however, and quickly moved to placate the factions that were developing, by finding extra resources that, in essence, restored the peace.

The Sprague School: Adversarial Politics

The school community at Sprague has been fighting since reform began. In fact, the roots of the conflict at Sprague actually pre-date reform. Ms. Rodriguez, the sitting principal in 1989, had long been viewed as ineffective and uninspired. The first LSC vowed to replace her and they were assisted in their efforts by Nuestra Comunidad Unida, a small community-based organization that offered training on the principal evaluation process. Many parents, however, were offended by the influence of Nuestra Comunidad Unida on their LSC and in their school. In reaction, they supported Ms. Rodriguez.

There were LSC meetings at least once a week throughout the spring of 1990 to decide the principalship, and every meeting brought out huge crowds. These meetings came to be called "Council Wars" because they were marked by angry outbursts between council members and the audience.[48] A few meetings were even shut down early by city police when it looked like fights might break out between parents and their representatives. Parents demanded that council members represent them by voting to retain their principal. LSC members shouted back that as elected officials they "had the power" to vote as they pleased.[49]

Several teachers volunteered to be on the principal evaluation-selection committee, but they eventually quit because they felt that the LSC had already made its decision. They, too, were offended that the Council was looking to organizers from Nuestra Comunidad Unida rather than to its own faculty for advice. Although many teachers acknowledged in private interviews that Ms. Rodriguez was mediocre, they supported her anyway, because they did not want a "bunch of parent puppets" influenced by a community organization taking control of their school. When it was time to vote, only the teacher representatives voted to retain Ms. Rodriguez. Shortly thereafter, the council offered a contract to Mr. Mendez, an educator from outside the district who was referred to the school by Nuestra Comunidad Unida.

Mr. Mendez made little effort to "heal the wounds" of his troubled school community when he first became principal. He thought that the council's strong support was a sufficient base from which he could run the school, but he was wrong. From the very beginning of his contract, many of his faculty and parents ignored him. A few teachers told us that they did not respect his credentials, and they did not think that his past experience outside of Chicago was relevant. Others said that it "didn't matter who he was, what he was, or where he came from . . . We don't like the fact that he got rammed down our throats."

Parents also kept their distance, both from the new principal and the school, for a time. Instead they used their energies to organize for the upcoming LSC elections. They put forward a slate of parents and community members that did not have ties to Nuestra Comunidad Unida or any other community-based organization, and they succeeded in winning the majority of seats on the council. The new LSC then vowed to get rid of Mr. Mendez and replace him with one of their "own." Mr. Mendez was made so miserable that he resigned at the end of two years.

Yet the fighting did not really calm down once Mr. Mendez was gone. Although there is now another new principal, distrust persists, and many wonder what will happen as the next round of LSC elections approaches.

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Schools like Sprague we read about in the newspaper and see on the late night news. A struggle for power may have has been simmering in their community for years. With school reform, this struggle enters the school, focusing first on who will be elected to the LSC, then on which CBO will train the council, and finally on who the LSC will select as principal. LSC meetings tend to be the arena where much of the fighting occurs. Although there may be huge audiences at these meetings and a lot of public debate, this debate often has little substantive content. Argument more often centers on personalities and local institutions, on who is for and who is against whom. The relentless struggle for control consumes everyone's energies and detracts from the school's ability to consider meaningful school improvement efforts. Distrust and antagonism can even lead to angry outbursts at LSC meetings, starkly exemplifying the conflict that has engulfed the broader school community.

In schools with sustained conflict, power is not consolidated in the principal. Rather, principals tend to be weak politically and ineffective instructionally. With an absence of strong principal leadership, the school community remains factionalized. The LSCs are often divided between members who are aligned with a CBO and those who have no ties to external agencies. Each bloc tends to have a constituency in the broader parent community, and these groups are also wary of each other.

The principal evaluation process is often a center of controversy in adversarial schools.

Typically, the strongest faction on the LSC uses its power to try to replace the principal with one of its own choosing.[50] In many schools it is alleged that this selection is influenced by the CBO. Other parents and community members oppose this involvement of "politicos" in the school; they also oppose the LSC's actions. As a result, they tend to support the sitting principal, even though not especially effective.

Teachers also may be factionalized. Some may want to use reform as an opportunity to hire a better principal. They are disappointed, however, to find a process so politicized that there is little room for professional judgment. This faction ends up disenfranchised. They do not support the current principal, but they also are unable to get anyone on the LSC to engage with them in a deliberative process to select a new one.

Other teachers tend to support the sitting administrator. They do not feel that "nonprofessionals" on the LSC should have the right to hire and fire the principal. They also oppose the intrusion of politics into the school. Their support for the sitting principal may not be an endorsement of his or her leadership style or abilities, however. Rather, it is a conservative position that seeks to limit the involvement of nonprofessionals in school decision-making and thereby maintain the status quo. In some schools, teachers are also motivated by fear about who the LSC might bring in as a replacement. Several have told us: "The devil you know is better than the devil you don't know."

The Thomas School: Strong Democracy

Mr. Sanchez was named principal at Thomas two years prior to reform. At his first faculty meeting, he shared his vision of Thomas becoming "a school for this community. . . a truly bilingual school," but prior to reform he says that it was difficult to really interest anyone

in serious change. He "applauded" the reform legislation "and seized upon it as an opportunity--finally--to make some things happen."

At first, some teachers in the "regular" program--the monolingual English program--felt intimidated. No one knew what "truly bilingual" meant, and a few teachers told us that it felt like they were "under the gun. . .to learn Spanish. . .to teach bilingual. . . .It felt like we were going to change to his way of thinking--whatever that was--or look for new jobs."

Over time Mr. Sanchez learned less threatening tactics. He initiated monthly "conversations" with parents and teachers to talk with them about the future of Thomas School. Mr. Sanchez started the first meeting by asking: "What if we had a community school where all of the adults spoke Spanish and English so no child would ever feel left out?" Then he would sit in the back and take notes as the parents and teachers talked about their hopes for the school. They eventually embraced a shared view of what their school should become. Some of the teachers told us that an important consequence of the meetings was that everyone got to "know each other better. . . .Teachers from bilingual and regular talked together--it seems like for the first time--and everyone listened to parents from both programs, too."

Building on this growing base of trust, the parents and principal asked the faculty to take the lead in developing the School Improvement Plan (SIP). They wanted a document that would guide the school's change effort and help them to achieve their vision of a bilingual community school.

Teachers at Thomas had been dissatisfied with their students' academic achievement for some time. Prior to reform, a few teachers had done some course work to advance their lane placement in the CPS salary schedule, but as a faculty they had not done much to enhance

practice at their school. One teacher commented that "reform changed the game. There was so much more opportunity in the city. . .workshops and activities and things for teachers to take advantage of. . .to get into. . .and now if kids didn't do well it was going to be our fault. We'd get the blame."

At first there were problems. A core of teachers from the regular program had volunteered to draft the SIP. This was essentially the same group that had been enterprising in seeking grants, programs, and professional development activities since reform began. These teachers had attended restructuring seminars at the Chicago Teachers Union, and they were also trained in peer coaching and Teaching Integrated Math and Science (TIMS). Several had also invited university faculty to come into their classrooms to work with them on their language arts curriculum. As this core group worked on the SIP, however, they began to realize that their involvement was not sufficient to change a school. To write a worthy SIP, they needed more teachers to participate; in particular, they needed bilingual teachers to work with them. They reported this to their principal, the LSC, PPAC, grade level and bilingual committees, and asked for help.

The bilingual teachers were hesitant at first. They were concerned that if they became involved, bilingual money might get diverted to whole-school initiatives. Heated debates ensued between the two teacher groups. Mr. Sanchez did not say much for the most part. He gave teachers time to talk through their concerns. He did remind them, at strategic moments, to think about the school's mission statement. He asked: "What does our mission require? Separate funds and faculties, or one school?"

These faculty meetings, which began toward the end of the 1990 school year, were

sustained through the winter of 1991. The eventual result was that the core group expanded, and a mixed group of bilingual and regular teachers drafted the SIP. They wrote into their plan their desire to find "high quality professional development that will help children succeed and unite both halves of the school." The school's lump-sum budget was also redeveloped to reflect these priorities.

Mr. Sanchez and many of the teachers have also reached out to parents. Mr. Sanchez is convinced that such involvement will enhance their personal lives and enable them to be better parents. During the first year of reform, Mr. Sanchez spent many long hours teaching his council about their responsibilities and how they could work more effectively as a group. Several of his teachers share his vision of parental participation, and they too have encouraged parents--including Spanish-speaking parents who need translation assistance--to participate on various committees and get involved in school activities. To date, the parents at Thomas have focused on revising the discipline code, adopting school uniforms, and starting a parent center. When it comes to improving the school's academic programs, they are a supportive but deferential group. Although they are interested in learning more about these issues and concerns, at this point they mostly tend to listen to their teachers and the principal, and to "go along" with their recommendations.

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In a school characterized as a strong democracy, there is dissatisfaction with existing school operations and sustained conversations about values, goals and improvement: What is wrong with the school? What should our mission be? What must we do to achieve real change?

A main route to strong democracy is principal initiative. In our sample of schools, two

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patterns of leadership have stimulated strong democracy. In the first, activist principals began working on improvement initiatives prior to the passage of PA 85-1418, but were somewhat stymied in their efforts either by the central office or by a recalcitrant staff. These principals have seized upon reform as an opportunity to work independently of Pershing Road (the current location of Chicago's central office) and perhaps to counsel a few troublesome teachers to leave the school and work elsewhere. With the new autonomy afforded by reform such principals have now openly encouraged greater engagement in school-wide affairs. In the second pattern of principal leadership, a principal committed to restructuring was hired by the LSC. The LSC then proceeds to support the principal's efforts to broadly engage participants in improvement initiatives throughout the school.[51]

Parents and teachers can also exert leadership in strong democracy schools. If parents themselves are organized politically and are sufficiently knowledgeable about educational issues to hold their own with professionals, they might use the power of the LSC directly with regard to the school's mission statement, budget and SIP to advance changes in school practice. Such councils are actualizing strong democracy. They are using the LSC as a place where informed and sustained debate takes place. The LSC then becomes an institution that encourages a broad base of participation, and fosters activity that is focused on the needs of children.

Teachers also can take the initiative for beginning the reform process. Many have taken advantage of the new professional development opportunities that are available in the city since reform. As they become knowledgeable about new programs or curricula, they promote these innovations in their school. Typically, teachers with this agenda will have to convince their principal to support what they want. Should the principal object, the teachers may organize with

parents and community members on the LSC not to renew that principal's contract when it next comes up for review. Either way, teachers are engaging in strong and deliberative democratic practice as they plan both what changes they want and how to organize and strategize to get them.

A school in the early stages of a strong democracy may confront frequent disagreements. In big urban schools, and especially ones where there is high family mobility and a diverse parent group, decision-makers do not know each other and they may feel awkward and act defensive. Some disagreements are just misunderstandings because the basic discussion processes of democratic localism are new. Others represent genuine differences of opinion that surface as participants learn for the first time about each others' points of view. If the school successfully attacks some initial problems, however, and if these conversations are sustained over time, a base of shared understandings can grow, positive sentiments and trust among participants rise, and a collective sense of efficacy emerges. The capacity of the school community to tackle even larger problems expands and the character of discussions about these problems takes on a more supportive tone. Decision-making in the school community now functions at a much higher level.

1.Easton, et al. 1991; Bennet, et al. 1992

2.See Rollow & Bryk (April 1993).

3.While there is some ambiguity about what is meant by the concept decentralization, virtually all definitions involve some increase in resources, authority and responsibility to the school level. See Hill, 1993.

4.See Wong (1992). Ball (1987) also makes the point that decentralized resources and authority stimulates a school politics.

5.Recent evaluative case studies of the Coalition of Essential Schools suggest that a failure on the part of both external supporters and the initial core group of school proponents to attend to the political dynamics of change, and also the need for stakeholders to develop strategic political skill, has undermined attempts to restructure. See Muncey & McQuillan, 1992.

6.Cremins, 1988; Tyack, 1974; Cohen, 1988.

7.Cuban (1988) distinguishes between "first order" reforms that are directed at core operations, and second order reforms that focus on the margins or peripheral programs of the school.

8.In fact, many reformers argue that without a fundamental change in school governance, structural change was unlikely to occur on a wide scale. See, for example, Chubb and Moe (1993) and Moore (1990) who make the same argument but from very different sides of the political spectrum.

9.Etzioni 1988, p. 1.

10.Etzioni, (1988) p. 10.

11.Etzioni, (1988) p. 6.

12.Peterson, 1976.

13.Sarason (1990) suggests that these institutional features have proven intractable to most reform efforts. One of the distinctive aspects of the restructuring movement is that many of these intractable practices are currently being questioned. This is suggestive of a new political practice that develops both to challenge institutional features and then to bring this restructuring to fruition.

14.Negotiations between the federal, state and local municipalities to fund schools are also a part of this educational politics literature. In **City Limits**, for example, Peterson (1981) contends that beginning in the late sixties urban school politics were changing because financing was in jeopardy. The Great Society era of big spending was over, and the city's power relative to the suburbs was diminishing. This forced Chicago and other big city school districts to compete for federal, state and local resources with their growing metropolitan rings.

15.Peterson, 1976.

16.The machine politics that Peterson describes is, in essence, a maintenance politics. By negotiating an interest politics that is responsive to specific complaints, pressures, individuals and interest groups, it forestalls fundamental challenges to the status quo.

17.Also described in Peterson's book is the use of patronage jobs to reward allies and co-opt potential enemies. This created an ethnic and racial succession in the city's school system that correlates with waves of new groups coming into the city's neighborhoods and being assimilated into Chicago's politics.

18.See Ball, 1987 & Blase, 1989, 1991.

19.Powell et al, 1985.

20.Ball's (1987) analysis of British secondary schools in the seventies was the pathbreaking work. In **The Micro-politics of the School** Ball examined the politics that developed when an effort was made to increase enrollment, a headmaster was replaced when his predecessor retired, and also the introduction of mixed ability grouping and other "innovations" to teaching practice. See also Blase (1991).

21.Ball observes that principals also bring in "experts" to solve some of their problems--those that they do not wish to tackle themselves and for a multitude of reasons do not want the faculty to have jurisdiction over either. Ball suggests that this reliance on experts diminishes teachers' opportunities to develop expertise. See also Bellah (1985, 1991), Etzioni (1988), MacIntrye (1984) and Lindblom (1990) for more discussion of the expert role.

22.Ball (1987) believes that a more democratic politics would be desirable. However, he suggests that democratic change and the ability to envision democratic alternatives is difficult because "thinking [in schools] is constrained by existing beliefs and values and crucial issues do not emerge" (p.128). In concluding his book, Ball suggests that the institutional "definition of the school"--its value system, goals and mission--could be opened to debate (p. 267). He conceives of a school micro-politics that focuses on a struggle over values and definitions rather than merely the distribution of resources. He ends with a question:

> Is the form of organizational life presented here the only possible form for running schools? The answer must be 'no' and as I see it the alternative lies in the direction of school democracy. But that, as they say, is another story (p. 280).

23.Mansbridge, personal communication, December, 1993. See as well, her book Beyond Adversary Democracy (1980) where she argues that successful polities are able to access the needs of the community on an issue by issue basis. Moreover, decision-makers have a repertoire of strategies that they can use utilize in different situations.

24.The schools that Ball (1987) studied were perceived in this way, and the reforms that they implemented are peripheral ones.

25.The Midwest Training Academy, a "school" that trains community organizers in the Alinsky tradition, is also located in Chicago. See Knoephle, P. (1993).

26.We borrow the term "strong democracy" from Barber's book of the same name (1984).

27.See Bellah et al, 1985 and 1991.

28.Evans and Boyte, 1986, pp. xix & 198.

29. Barber, 1984, p. 126.

30.Barber (1984) calls this a "liberal" or "thin democracy." Anchored in the rational choice theory described earlier, it is predicated on an "ideology of radical individualism" that regards individual freedom and private choices as paramount (p. 110). He suggests that American democracy has become synonymous with representative government. Elected representatives vote on contested issues and decisions are made by majority rule. Much negotiation takes place in private--behind the scenes. In representative democracy there are winners and losers, accountability functions primarily through the electoral process, and the interests of the voters are perceived to be static and unchanging. Between elections substantive issues are rarely publically discussed, and ties among citizens and their representatives tend to be weak. Special interest groups hire lobbyists to represent them, and experts are brought in to solve problems. Further, as the population has increased in size and much governmental activity has migrated to the state and federal levels, citizens are left with less and less say about politics, and their local, public institutions are weakened.

31.Barber, 1984 p. 119. Similarly, Barber says:

> Decision-making without common talk always falls short of judgment and cannot be the basis of strong democratic politics. The test of legitimacy is whether an individual value has been changed in some significant way to accommodate larger, more common or public, concerns. If a value emerges from this process unchanged then it is either a private value masquerading as a public norm or it denotes a prior consensus that has been revealed by the political process. There can be no strong democratic legitimacy without ongoing talk. (p.136)

It is important to note, however, that Barber discounts the kind of talk that occurs around pluralist bargaining, as the substantive focus of this talk is about individual or group interest, rather than the public good.

32.Peterson, 1976.

33.Bowles and Gintis (1987) suggest that this transportation of practices is not limited to ideas and understandings, but extends to well learned skills and ways of doing things that have developed from their experiences in other sites of power as well.

34.See Bowles and Gintis (1987) for further discussion of the "history of the liberal discourse of rights" p. 25. The authors suggest that:

In society meanings are not fixed, they are prizes in a pitched conflict among

groups attempting to constitute their social identity by transforming the communicative tools that link their members together and set them apart from others (p. 157).

Thus, the words "become [themselves] the object of social struggle" (p. 161)

35.Chicago Tribune, 1988. See also Wong & Rollow, 1990.

36.Here we seek to distinguish between parents who lobby on behalf of their own biological children, and parents who strive to represent the concerns of "all children." In operation, the former type of parent may not function differently from any other interest group. The latter parent, in contrast, is articulating a concern for the common good.

37.As noted earlier, a main reason for democratic localism in nineteenth century rural America, was that parents might control the socialization of their children (Katz, 1987). Community control carried these same themes into New York City's more modern-day conversations (Fantini & Gittel, 1973, Fantini, Gittel & Magat, 1970, Fein, 1970).

38.Boyd, 1976.

39.As noted earlier, the legislation relied on both a carrot (increased resources and authorities) and a stick (the loss of tenure) in its effort to encourage principals to work with parents toward a common mission of school improvement.

40.Bellah et al (1985, 1991).

41.See Ball (1987) for discussion of an "authoritarian" leadership style.

42.Weber, 1947.

43.Rollow & Bryk, 1992.

44.A provocative corollary to the lawlessness of some present-day urban communities might be found in Putnam's (1993) description of feudal Italy. His research suggests that those regions wracked most by crime and anarchy in the dark and middle ages are the same regions where the mafia and the institutional Catholic Church gained and maintained their strongest footings. Both of these institutions were hierarchical and paternalistic, much like the description of consolidated principals' powers schools offered here.

45.In a recent report on Local School Councils (Easton et al, 1993), the LSC activity in consolidated power schools has been described as "limited governance" type.

46.This case of maintenance politics exemplifies the kind of public, pluralist bargaining that can occur in schools. We distinguish it from those maintenance schools where old treaties and long-standing norms determine political activity.

47.The magnet schools and "good" schools in this group are unlikely to receive large amounts of discretionary funding because they enroll so few low-achievement and poor children. Still, they do get some, and even minimal amounts become a point of negotiation for the principal. In contrast, some of the "weak" schools that fall into this category may receive huge amounts of discretionary money. In maintenance politics, the principal typically has a great deal of say about how this money is divided and spent.

48."Council wars" is a reference to the fighting that occurred among alderman in Chicago's city council during Mayor Washington's first term in office.

49.For more discussion of the historical tension between direct and representative democracy, see Morone, 1990.

50.In Chicago it takes seven votes to hire a new principal. If parents and community members on the LSC are indeed factionalized, it is likely then that none of the factions will have the requisite votes to make a new appointment. Each faction can, however, bloc the appointments of its rival.

51.As noted in the discussion of strong democratic theory, an exception to this idea might be a charter school or another type of new school where the professional staff self-selects and is, in fact, attracted to the school because of its defining principles. It is conceivable that such schools essentially skip the strong democracy phase.

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